

## **Statement By**

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Mr. Chairman, fellow members, I welcome you to Minnesota. My name is Richard Magnusson, from Roseau, Minnesota, home of the Polaris Snowmobile...13 miles from the Canadian border. I raise wheat, barley, corn, soybeans, sunflowers, canola, flax, dry beans, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial rye grass, Reed Canary grass and native grass seed.

The majority of the farmers I speak to are very supportive of the current farm bill. You don't hear grumblings about this program as we have heard about the programs in the past. The current Farm Bill offers a stable income source through the use of direct payments, offers us income protection through the counter-cyclical program, and provides us a market floor through the loan program. However, we have to realize that this program was put together in 2002 and the economics of farming have changed dramatically since that time. The increasing costs of energy have eroded the small margins of profit that farmers must live with. We don't enjoy the liberty of passing on these costs to the middlemen. The instability we see in the Middle East creates havoc in the oil markets which so much of our farm inputs are based upon. The price of fuel impacts us as we plant, harvest and transport our commodities to market. We have seen the price of fuel and fertilizer double since we last wrote the Farm Bill. I realize that we will be writing this new Farm Bill under difficult budgetary circumstances but a re-balancing of the formulas amongst the commodity program crops to reflect the higher costs of production should be taken into account.

I also believe we should add a bioenergy component to the Farm Bill. I recently re-read some parts of Thomas Friedman's book, "The World is Flat" and the one part of the book that I find interesting is the idea that our country needs to make

alternative energy and conservation our next “moon shot”. If our country put forth the same effort into making the United States energy independent as we did putting a man on the moon in the 1960’s we could come a long way in solving our energy problem in ten years. What we need is leadership to bring all the forces to bear that got us to the moon in 1969. We need additional funding for science across the board to remain the world leaders in innovation and invention. Our leadership in technology over the past decades has come from the investments that government put into the sciences in the 1960’s. That investment inspired computer technology and other innovations that led to the development of a new industry base in the United States. We now need leadership to inspire this generation into dreaming a way to be an energy independent nation in 10 years.

A case in point. Northwestern Minnesota produces the Kentucky bluegrass and Perennial ryegrass seed that you use to keep your lawns and golf courses green throughout the winter months. We also grow the seed that farmers sow to grow Switchgrass. However, the Switchgrass we produce today is not bred to fit the needs of the bioenergy concept. It does not produce enough tons per acre to economically be used as a fuel conversion source. We need to enhance the germplasm to bring forth new varieties that would produce enough tons per acre of biomass needed to make Switchgrass and other biomass a viable feedstock for energy conversion. I would like to submit for the record a comprehensive Bio-based Renewable Energy and Industrial Systems plan put forth by the University of Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota and the Northwestern Grass Seed Growers that could be the start of the dream for energy independence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
Richard Magnusson